TAKING OVER THE 'EMPIRE'

TARAJI P. HENSON ON FOX'S HIP HOP HIT. PAGE 16

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Say it ain't snow

Snow job. The first blizzard of the season fizzled, but precautions ground city to a halt. PAGE 02

Max Lentz makes the most of his day off Tuesday, sledding down a hill in Old City. / CHARLES MOSTOLLER, METRO

Canceled buses, trains cause havoc

PAGE 08

Interior design that won't break the bank

PAGE 17

Union will resemble different team in 2015

PAGE 24

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1 NEWS

Top 3

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1 'Post-"blizzard" NYC reopens after forecasters' "imprecise science"'

2 'Blizzard 2015 is Big Bust and #SnowJob2015'

3 'Chris Tully was needed by the world, "If only for a little while," friend says'

On the go

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Court

Prosecutors will seek death penalty for suspect in cop shooting

Prosecutors will seek the death penalty in the case against the man who shot two state troopers — killing one — outside their barracks in Blooming Grove on Sept. 12.

Eric Frein, who was caught after eluding authorities across two counties in Northeastern Pennsylvania for 48 days, will be arraigned Thursday in Milford.

Frein, 31, is charged with terrorism and possession of explosive devices.

He has been held without bail since Oct. 30. METRO

Governor

Gov. Wolf pushing for medical marijuana

Gov. Tom Wolf isn't wasting any time on the issue of legalizing medical marijuana.

A bill that would legalize medical marijuana was reintroduced in the state house in Harrisburg, reports said.

Wolf said that if the bill, which would help alleviate side effects of debilitating diseases and ailments, reached his desk, he would sign it, according to the Inquirer.

A similar bill, which was not as broad, was approved in the state Senate but was never considered in the house of representatives. The newspaper reported the bill received favorable reception in both houses of the state legislature Tuesday.

Under the new bill, marijuana growing, processing and allocation would be monitored by the state's licensing board.

TOMMY ROWAN

Max Lentz makes the most of a snowy pile in Old City (top). Juno left the City Center pretty much unscathed Tuesday. / CHARLES MOSTOLLER, METRO

Snowstorm Juno a complete snow job

Bait and switch. What threatened to be the first and largest blizzard in some time failed to deliver.

Snowless streets, overly salted sidewalks, and less than 2 inches of snow blanketed the city by 7 a.m. Monday. The only thing missing was people walking or driving to work or school.

Philadelphia's snow emergency was lifted 12 hours after it started. Snow accumulation projections, set by the National Weather Service, fell dramatically below expectations.

By 10 p.m. Monday the projected inch-count hovered between 10 and 14 inches, but Tuesday morning saw little more than an inch of snow coating the city's roads and sidewalks. The storm had cleared the area by noon.

But schools, courts and the city were still closed.

Mayor Michael Nutter defended his decision to close the city at a press conference Tuesday morning.

"I'd rather be prepared and disappointed with inconvenience, than underprepared and surprised with any kind of tragedy," Nutter said.

Nutter, who said he would always prefer to take a cautious approach with a significant storm on the horizon, said his decision was based on "public safety."

While the storm did not turn out as expected, Nutter said he felt obligated to make a decision so he could give parents and residents time to plan ahead.

National Weather Service meteorologist Sarah Johnson said the storm stayed farther west than expected, and saved Philadelphia from a more brutal beating.

On Twitter today, meteorologist Gary Szatkowski issued a public apology.

While he noted that many cities along the Northeast corridor were still hit by blizzard-like snowfall totals, "for much of New Jersey, and for the Philadelphia metropolitan area, this is a big forecast miss," he wrote.

Quote

"I'd rather be prepared and disappointed ... than underprepared and surprised with any kind of tragedy."

Nutter

TOMMY ROWAN
@tommyrowan
tommy.rowan@metro.us

Transit

SEPTA riders in town were out of luck

SEPTA riders catching Regional Rail trains home from Center City on Tuesday evening faced delays due to the altered schedule set by the storm.

Riders faced crowded trains and longer wait times between the Tuesday rush hour from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. because trains were placed on a Saturday schedule. SEPTA was anticipating a reduced ridership on predictions from the National Weather Service.

All transit modes are returned to normal weekday schedules Wednesday.

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Delaware

Police find cocaine in prosthetic leg

More than ounce of cocaine was found hidden inside a prosthetic leg during a routine police stop in Delaware Monday, police said Tuesday.

Marlow Holmes, 39, of Dover, was a passenger in a SUV that was stopped by Dover Police around 2:30 p.m. Monday, police said.

A K-9 dog with the unit helped officers find 28 grams of cocaine inside the leg, police said.

TOMMY ROWAN

Holmes / DOVER POLICE

Volunteer snow shovelers aid with snowfall response

ABC Men. Local charity mobilized volunteers to help the elderly and infirm.

The ABC Men provide free shoveling services to the elderly and disabled during a past snowfall. / COURTESY OF ABC MEN

Though Tuesday's snowstorm didn't live up to expectations as a disaster, volunteers with a free snow removal service still hit the streets to help the elderly and disabled.

"These are folks that, even though it was a really light snowfall, they need help," said Jackie Wleh, founder of ABC Men, a local charity that offers free snow shoveling during winter.

The group of about 10 volunteers cruised from Drexel Hill, west of the city, to the peak of Northeast Philadelphia, making calls to residents in need of a shoveling.

"It's free of charge," Wleh said. "We'll take our shovels, salt, do the cars if necessary, then their sidewalks and pour salt after."

The Streets Department can ticket residents who do not clear a 3-foot-wide path in front of their homes after a snowfall. Wleh said the service is to help residents avoid the fees, but also to make sure they can get out of their homes.

Wleh has offered the service for about four years. It's common for neighbors to come and ask the volunteers to shovel their walks as well, he said, which they are happy to do.

"People are like, 'What? Are you kidding me?' when they hear what we're doing," Wleh said. "One lady said to one of the volunteers, 'What planet are you from?' But that's love."

The clients whom the volunteers help range from a 95-year-old man living alone to a woman with a heart condition and back problems that prevent her from shoveling her own walks.

The only restriction on the amount of help they provide, Wleh said, is the lack of resources.

"If we had a van, we could do 100 or 1,000 times as much," he said. "But if you wait until you have the money, you're never going to do anything."

Quote

"One lady said to one of the volunteers, 'What planet are you from?'"

Wleh

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MOTHER NATURE'S FICKLE

Street talk

DAVE WARNER
METRO COLUMNIST/ VETERAN NEWSMAN
Dave Warner tackles Philadelphia metropolitan issues. Email Dave at EditExpress@verizon.net.

Even the dog was OK with Tuesday's puny storm, and he usually hates snow.

But this snowfall, if you want to call it that, was a paltry 1.2 inches, says the National Weather Service, and the snow didn't even cover his paws as he dashed out for … well, you know.

This situation — with the snow, not the dog — prompted, we hear, an outcry of "We wuz cheated," from those who thought Tuesday would just be a dandy day to stay in our PJ's most of the day and watch movies on TV.

And some of you did. Like the schools, closed everywhere in the face of what promised to be a calamitous event, could hardly undo their closing announcements when the unbearable truth became known — that is, there was really very little snow.

Students could thus be on the sofa with an algebra book, while teachers buffed their lesson plans. We made that up.

Quoted

"We here in Philadelphia did not take this in the humorous stride as some in New York City, which bore pretty much the same fate as we did."

There are actual facts to back up the palpable sense of being cheated, because many of you were dragged to work late. SEPTA tells us this.

The normal transit rush hour here is from 6:30 a.m. to 8 a.m.

Tuesday, however, the rush was from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. after you were dragged off the sofa by a call from your boss, only to learn that Regional Rail was on a weekend schedule.

But you were good workers.

"We had trains that were full, and packed," said SEPTA spokesperson Jerri Williams. Every other form of transit was on a normal weekday schedule, but train crews are apparently not so quickly recalled.

So you probably want to know what happened, why you had to leap off the sofa, why you had to wait for a weekend kind of train, and why you ended up at work even when you didn't want to.

For this, we turn to the weather service, namely Kristin Kline, a meteorologist who understands these things.

OK, she concedes that for much of the day on Monday they were thinking we'd get 6 to 10 inches, which might, after all, have been enough to remain on the sofa.

But late Monday night, she explained, the lousy low pressure area that could have caused The Blizzard of the Week turned eastward. Like 90 miles east.

"It just didn't work out for us," she said of the storm, as though we were looking forward to it.

We here in Philadelphia did not take this in the humorous stride as some in New York City, which bore pretty much the same fate as we did.

The Twittersphere, for instance, showed a couple of pieces of meteorological wit during the day Tuesday.

One, a picture of barren asphalt on a New York street, bore the words, "Pray for NYC." Another, also showing a barren street, announced, "NYC blizzard 2015 — we will rebuild."

Kind of flaky, huh?

Inflexible

Lululemon's roof collapses, three injured

The roof of a Center City athletic store collapsed Tuesday afternoon injuring three, fire officials said.

The roof of the one-story Lululemon Athletica store, on the 1500 block of Walnut Street, collapsed onto the retail space at 3:25 p.m., said Executive Chief Clifford Gilliam.

The three people were injured in the collapse, but none of the injuries are considered life-threatening, Gilliam said. TOMMY ROWAN

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Delaware County

Parents charged after ferret's attack on baby

Burnie Fraim, 42, and Jessica Benales, 24, were officially charged this week with endangering the welfare of a child after an attack by pet ferrets on their infant.

Three pet ferrets broke out of a cage on Jan. 22 and devoured part of the 1-month-old girl's face while she was left alone strapped into a car seat in the house, police said. The parents were upstairs at the time. METRO

Burnie Fraim and Jessica Benales / FACEBOOK

For many, cancellations hurtful, not helpful

Complaints. Closures for an expected blizzard lost some residents a day's work.

Streets in Center City were empty the day after the storm. / CHARLES MOSTOLLER

The excitement over a promised blizzard may have made a lot of kids happy by creating a snow day, but for parents who missed work, the cancellations hit them right in the wallet.

"It hurts. I need all the money I can get," said Jonathan James, 46, of North Philly, who said he works at a restaurant and was told not to come in to work due to the predicted snowfall.

Meanwhile, his children missed a day of school.

"It was worse yesterday, and they were in school," he said, referring to the heavy winds and light snowfall all day Monday.

Many believed the weather Monday was a sign of a foot-and-a-half of snow to come — not the main act in and of itself.

Work was also canceled on Tuesday for Howard Williams, 29, who said he works at a heating and cooling company.

"One day you lost pay — it hurts your budget," Williams said while doing shopping in North Philly.

"All for nothing," he said, pointing at the clear streets and snowless sidewalks. "They should have saved the day off for when they really needed it."

The decision to close city offices was made around 10 p.m. Monday when forecasts called for more than 12 inches. But just an hour later, meteorologists were reining in their expectations to closer to four to eight inches.

"They had a chance to un-cancel everything, but they didn't," said Tanya Snowden, 43, from West Philly, who was disappointed to find the Free Library closed.

Quoted

"I really hope the city is saving some money by closing everything."

Snowden

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Politics

Jim Kenney running for mayor

City Councilmember Jim Kenney announced Tuesday that he is resigning his seat — which he has occupied for the last 23 years — to run for mayor.

The City Charter requires that elected officials resign from one office before running for another.

Kenney said Tuesday that he didn't want to get old and look back and have any regrets.

"I don't want to be retired, sitting on my porch and saying 'I should have tried it,'" Kenney said. "I'm willing to take the risk of re-signing and to take the risk of not winning."

The Inquirer first reported last week that Kenney was going to make a run at the office.

TOMMY ROWAN

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Bowe Bergdahl to face desertion charges: NBC

Current duties. Bergdahl is stationed at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, where he is working as a clerk.

U.S. Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl will be charged with desertion for disappearing from his base in Afghanistan in 2009, NBC News reported on Tuesday.

Bergdahl, who was released from captivity last year in a controversial Taliban prisoner swap, could be charged within a week, the television network said, quoting senior defense officials who were not identified by name.

However, senior Army and defense officials contacted by Reuters could not confirm the report.

The officer in charge of the case, General Mark Milley, is reviewing facts and findings submitted by Army investigators last month and has not publicly said whether he will file charges, said spokesman Jim Hinnant. Milley heads the Fort Bragg, North Carolina-based U.S. Forces Command.

Milley is expected to make a decision soon on whether the findings merit a court-martial or some form of administrative punishment. The general also could decide no action against Bergdahl is warranted.

Bergdahl's attorney, New Haven, Connecticut-based Eugene Fidell, declined to comment on NBC's report.

If officials conclude that Bergdahl broke U.S. military law, they could force him to forfeit hundreds of thousands of dollars in back pay accumulated during his captivity and give up future benefits, NBC said.

REUTERS

Years

5

Bergdahl, who spent five years in captivity after leaving his post, was released in May in exchange for five prisoners from the U.S. prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The deal was blasted by some Republicans, and some of his fellow soldiers called him a deserter.

HE WOULD ALSO LIKELY BE GIVEN CONSIDERATION FOR HIS TIME IN CAPTIVITY, NBC QUOTED OFFICIALS AS SAYING. / US ARMY VIA GETTY IMAGES

Aide reports. Obama seeks close, candid ties to Saudi King Salman

President Barack Obama sought to cement ties with Saudi Arabia as he came to pay his respects on Tuesday after the death of King Abdullah, a trip that underscores the importance of a U.S.-Saudi alliance that extends beyond oil interests to regional security.

Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes told reporters Obama wanted to discuss with the new Saudi King Salman the fight against Islamic State, the volatile situation in Yemen and talks on ending a long-running dispute about Iran's nuclear ambitions.

"We do believe that Saudi policy will remain quite similar to how it's been under King Abdullah," he said, adding Obama wanted to forge the same kind of "close relationship" with Salman as he had with his predecessor.

Obama's visit comes as Washington struggles with worsening strife in the Middle East, where it counts Saudi Arabia among its few steady partners in a campaign against ISIS.

REUTERS

Saudi's newly appointed King Salman, right, shakes hands with President Barack Obama at Erga Palace in Riyadh. / GETTY IMAGES

Quoted

"They didn't always agree, they were candid in their differences, but they were also able to do a lot of things together." Rhodes

Virtual-reality headsets have a future in movie making. / GETTY IMAGES

Virtual-reality invasion gives filmmakers new outlook

Festival programmer. The number of virtual reality projects at Sundance has almost tripled since last year.

On a packed jet headed to the Sundance Film Festival last week, a Samsung Gear VR virtual-reality headset made its way across the aisles from one Hollywood participant to the next who wanted to check it out.

Its owner is Ted Schilowitz of 20th Century Fox, a "Fox Futurist" according to his business card. He traveled to Sundance to exhibit a virtual-reality clip based on the studio's film "Wild," which stars Reese Witherspoon and was released last year.

The goggles immerse viewers in a new world that takes them beyond traditional movie-watching and puts them right in the middle of the action. Hollywood is jumping in, too, at Sundance, the Robert Redford-run film festival known chiefly as a showcase for independent films. This year, the auteurs share the spotlight with Samsung and Google Inc., which is giving away 8,000 of its low-tech Cardboard VR devices, and tech-centric studio executives like Schilowitz, who spoke on a standing-room only panel as part of the festival's New Frontier program.

"The New Frontier was always the thing I had to drag people to at Sundance," Schilowitz, who has been attending for more 15 years, said Saturday after the session, which had to turn some visitors away. "Now everyone wants to come to us."

Hollywood has been grappling with technology on multiple levels. Online players such as Netflix Inc. and Amazon.com Inc. compete with movie theaters for audiences' time, while also creating new markets for films, especially smaller ones. New formats such as virtual reality create artistic opportunities, but commercialization is a challenge. BLOOMBERG

Virtual reality

11

The number of virtual reality projects at Sundance has almost tripled since last year, said senior festival programmer Shari Frilot, who is curating the New Frontier program focused on cinematic innovations and new ways to tell stories. Of the 14 New Frontier installations, 11 are virtual-reality experiences.

Swearing in

Two officers shot, suspect killed in Minn. city hall shooting

A man shot two police officers shortly after a swearing-in ceremony at a city hall in a Minneapolis suburb on Monday night and then was fatally shot by other officers in a rapid exchange of fire, authorities said.

The two police officers were in good condition and were expected to survive after the shooting at the city hall in New Hope, Minnesota, Chief Deputy Mike Carlson of the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office told a news conference.

Carlson said authorities were not looking for any additional suspects.

Quoted

"Two officers were struck by the gunfire, other officers were able to return fire, subsequently killing the suspect."

Carlson

He did not identify the officers who were shot or the suspect and took no questions after reading a brief statement.

Two new officers were sworn in shortly after 7 p.m. near the start of a regular city council meeting and were fired at just after they left the council chambers by an adult male, Carlson said. REUTERS

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4G boom. Telecom network spending seen rising this year

Europe's telecoms equipment makers look set for an unpredictable year because of consolidation among their operator customers and a slowdown of buildouts of faster mobile networks, known as 4G, in the United States and China.

Nevertheless, overall spending on mobile and fixed networks is expected to grow for a second consecutive year, as operators worldwide seek to improve coverage and add capacity to keep up with rising data traffic from video and smartphones.

While construction of 4G networks is largely complete in the United States, Japan and Korea, the technology is just arriving in much of Eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa.

Market research firm Gartner predicts operators' spending on mobile infrastructure, including traditional radio base stations and newer gear like small cells, will increase 8 percent this year to hit $43.36 billion.

Investment in fixed networks is set to rise 7.7 percent to $10.33 billion, driven by fiber broadband rollouts, it said. REUTERS

Networked / GETTY IMAGES

Quoted

"The 4G story is spreading after the first spurt of rollouts in the U.S., Japan and Korea is behind us."

Deborah Kish, an analyst at Garner

Investing in Russia: So crazy, it just might work

Opportunity. For the intrepid, the thrill-seeking or the very wealthy, Russia still has an appeal.

Russia still has relatively low debt and high currency reserves, while it continues to provide much of Europe's energy. / GETTY IMAGES

On paper, there's no good reason to invest in Russia right now. The country's dealing with a collapsed currency, plunging oil prices, recession, conflict in Ukraine, sanctions and a government that's hard to predict. The MSCI Russia Index lost almost half its value last year, and those losses could continue in 2015 and even into 2016. On Monday, as fighting in Ukraine intensified, the ruble dropped another 2.3 percent against the dollar, to its lowest level since Dec. 16.

Since August, investors have poured $861 million into the Market Vectors Russia ETF, the largest U.S.-based Russia fund. "In investing, what is comfortable is rarely profitable," according to investment firm Research Affiliates in a new analysis.

Investors are watching Russia's inscrutable and unpredictable government for any signs that President Vladimir Putin might be ready to make nice with the West or reform the Russian economy. So far, no dice. But, historically the Russian government has been more "business-friendly and reform-minded" when oil prices are low, Bank of America strategist David Hauner said in a Jan. 12 research note. Oil under $50 a barrel could spur Putin to do something about Russia's economy, famously unproductive and overly reliant on the energy industry. BLOOMBERG

Capital

$1B

Sanctions are depriving Russia of the foreign technology and capital it desperately needs, to the tune of $100 billion in capital this year, BofA estimates. But, Research Affiliates notes, those sanctions are "relatively mild" compared with those imposed on Iran, Cuba or North Korea.

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CULTURE

THE WORD

Ned Ehrbar takes on the world of gossip.

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Seen at this year's Sundance Film Festival

Competition for Tallest Hat in the West is pretty fierce

A big part of keeping warm at Sundance is keeping your head covered. And while some stars, like Spike Lee and Bobcat Goldthwait, go traditional, others are getting, let's say, a bit creative. But what else would you expect from Erykah Badu?

Some creative takes on keeping warm

Doing Sundance right is all about bundling up, as Lena Dunham, Q'orianka Kilcher and Rex Lee clearly understand. But the band PPL MVR got maybe a little carried away.

Those poor musicians

For some reason, some sadistic, twisted photographer keeps making Sundance Music Cafe acts like Harry Draper, Jack Sedman and The Family Crest go outside onto the slopes totally underdressed to take photos. Someone get these musicians some cocoa.

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From left: Dan Rothman, Hannah Reid and Dot Major. / PROVIDED

London Grammar's accidental fame

The British are coming. The U.K.'s biggest indie band keeps stealing the spotlight, despite shunning it.

Coldplay and Imagine Dragons count themselves as fans, their concert sales have outsold Miley Cyrus' in their native U.K. and their album, "If You Wait" debuted at No. 2 on the U.K. chart. And at a time when celebrity is perhaps the most sought-after accolade, the three best friends who make up indie electropop band London Grammar have no interest in being "famous." In fact, fame scares them.

'We just love making music'

When we asked band member Dot Major why the performance-shy trio pursued such a public career, his answer is simple. "I suppose we just love making music and if we didn't [perform], then we wouldn't [get to do that]," he tells us on the phone from London.

"Often when you're writing music, you don't end up thinking about the fact that you might end up performing it."

The band, whose sound has been compared so much to The XX and Florence & The Machine that it's a lazy cliche, met as students at the University of Nottingham. After vocalist Hannah Reid posted a photo on Facebook of her with a guitar, guitarist Dan Rothman messaged asking if she wanted to form a band. Reid said sure, suggesting Major serve as the drummer.

'We've grown, not changed'

Seemingly overnight, they became the new indie "it" band.

"I think we've grown, but I don't think we've changed necessarily," Major says. And in terms of their friendship, they're closer than ever now. "We've certainly gone from what was a best friendship to a sort of sibling relationship," he says. As if a pesky thing like fame would get in the way of that.

If you go

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WHY COMPROMISE?

Who gets to run Dad's hip hop producing 'Empire'?

Interview.
Taraji P. Henson talks Cookie's big plans on "Empire."

"Empire" airs Wednesdays at 9 p.m. on Fox. | FOX

It's not often that a network drama can be compared to Shakespeare, but Fox's "Empire" quickly drew comparisons to the plot of "King Lear." The story of hip-hop magnate Lucious Lyon has some obvious parallels to "Lear," given Lucious' concerns about his mortality and which of his three sons is most qualified to inherit the kingdom. But one way the show strays from Shakespeare is in the character of Cookie, Lucious' ex-wife and a recent parolee. Played with powerful presence by Taraji P. Henson, Cookie shakes up the world of "Empire" by managing the career of her talented son Jamal, whose gayness is a constant issue for his father.

HENSON
GETTY IMAGES

Cookie always seems to own the room when she comes in. How do you play that?
Who doesn't want to walk in a room and own it? There are moments when I feel like I can't and then I punk out. I'm like, everybody's going to look at me. That's Taraji. Cookie doesn't care. She doesn't have anything to lose.

She and Lucious seem to have some chemistry. Will we see them get closer?
There's a history between them that you cannot deny. Also, there's unfinished business. You can't leave a relationship of that many years and three sons unresolved. And when it's unresolved, there's always going to be "are they/aren't they."

Will we see Cookie forming alliances with people besides Jamal?
You will definitely see her with other alliances with talent. She came not to just get a check from Lucious. That is her company. She wants to be very much a part of it. Don't take Cookie for a joke. She's not just some woman flailing, loud and sassy. She has a plan, and she's very smart.

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‘Big Design, Small Budget’

Decorate. Fake high-end living with designer Betsy Helmuth’s tips.

Interior designer Betsy Helmuth doesn’t design for celebrities. Her firm, Affordable Interior Design, is all about creating fabulous spaces for people with realistic budgets. “Our clients have their eye on the bottom line,” says Helmuth. “And most of them are renters so they’re wondering, ‘How much do we invest in a space that we’re not going to be in forever?’”

In her new book, “Big Design, Small Budget” the bargain-hunting New York-based designer answers these questions and more. Here are her rules for designing on a dime.

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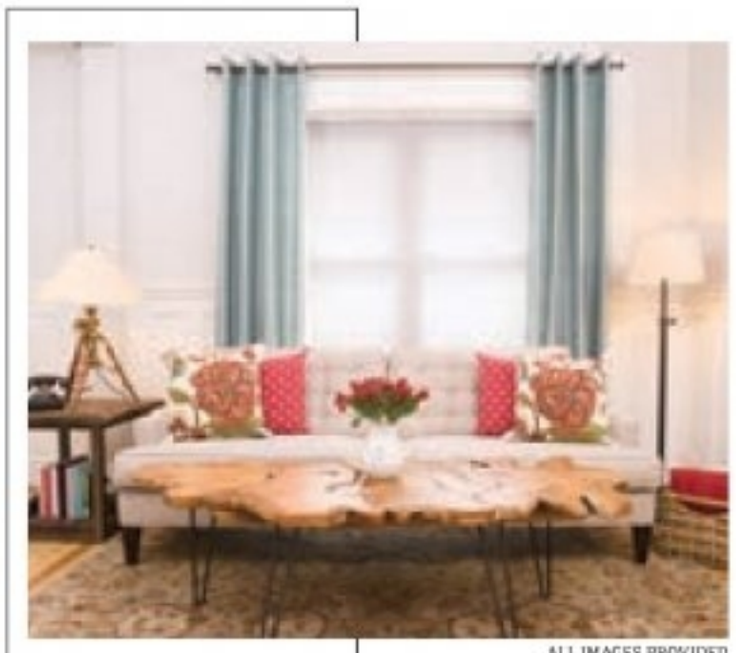
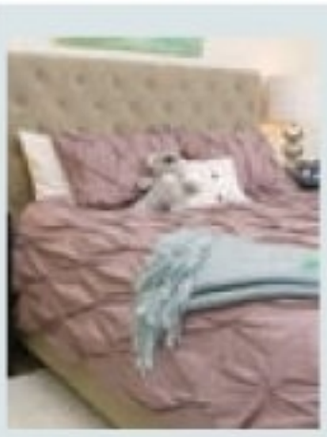


ALL IMAGES PROVIDED

Pick a patterned rug

Forget that cream Beni Ourain you have your eye one. “Pick a rug with a lively patter,” says Helmuth. And by that she means a floor covering with three colors or more. “Patterns conceal pet and party stains better than solid or more simple ones,” explains the designer. “If you have people over, you don’t have to worry about them spilling red wine or a juice box on the rug.” Another bonus: “A lot of us can’t afford really great art so a big area rug can serve as that visual interest,” she says.

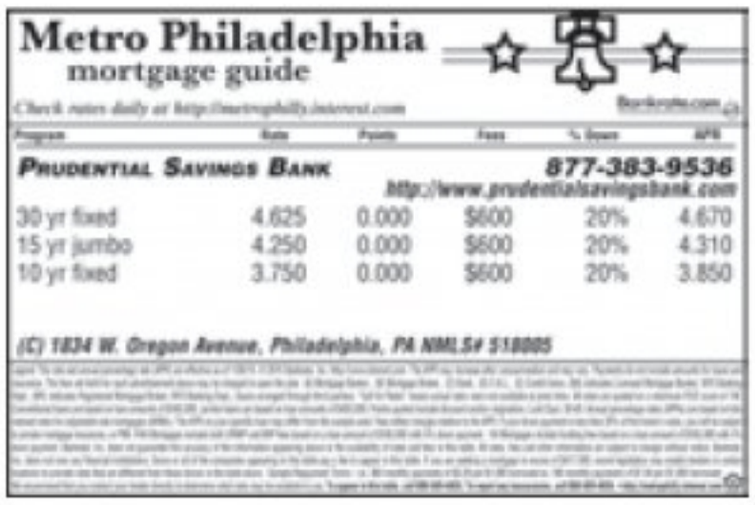


Splurge on a luxe duvet

“The bed is the biggest piece of furniture in your bedroom,” says Helmuth. “So if you make the thing that’s on top of the bed really decadent you can save on the things around it like the sheets, nightstands and rug. No one will be the wiser.”

Brighten up

For those of us with dark apartments, Helmuth says go crazy with lamps. “My rule for every room is, in addition to overhead, you needs three lamps,” says the designer. “They create cozy pools of light that feel more comfortable.”



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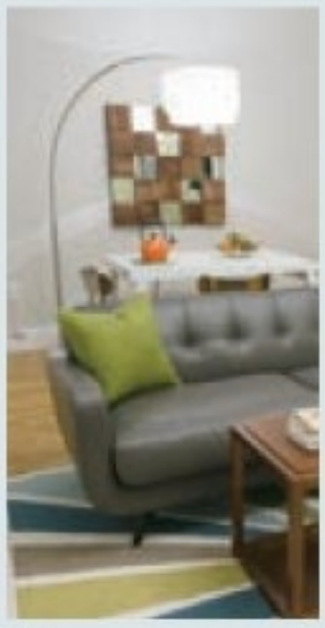

Fake a chandelier

Love chandeliers but stuck with concrete ceilings? “I recommend getting an arching lamp and putting the shade over the center of your table,” says Helmuth. She likes CB2’s Big Dipper Arc Lamp ($199).

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Tips and tricks.
'These words' of beauty advice are pure gold.

The pocket full of sunshine that is Natasha Bedingfield is known for her happy songs. You can't listen to "Unwritten" or "These Words" and stay in a bad mood. It's part of why beauty brand Philosophy enlisted her to write a song for their new "Hope & Grace" campaign. Bedingfield's new single, "Hope" is tied to the brand's new promise to give 1 percent of their total sales to mental health organizations across the country.

It doesn't hurt that the British songstress has amazing skin. We couldn't help but ask her what her secrets are:

What are your favorite beauty must-haves?
I love Tom Ford makeup. I wear Tom Ford lipstick every day. But my beauty must-have has to be a magnifying mirror. Most people stay away from them, but sometimes the lighting [in a room where you're getting ready] can be really bad, so you can hold the mirror up and see better.

How do you keep your skin looking so great?
I cleanse religiously. I use a scrub, cleanser

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Some 20 percent of the proceeds from Natasha Bedingfield's song "Hope" will go to Philosophy's Hope & Grace campaign. / GETTY IMAGES

and moisturizer every day. And I also stay out of the sun.

Do you do anything different in winter for your skin?
I definitely use a stronger moisturizer. I also like natural oils and shea butter.

What do you put on to feel confident?
Perfume, I love. And heels give you power.

Do you have any beauty tricks?
Eyebrows are such a good thing to emphasize because they can really make your face have more shape; they help frame your face. So let them grow out, or draw them in and elongate them a bit. That's my beauty trick.

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Trainer Alex Nicholas' start in endurance racing should give you an idea of what the goal is for the members of Epic Hybrid Training.

"I was actually looking up the movie '300' online, and when I Googled it I saw that there was this thing called Spartan races," he says.

The races — essentially a miles-long obstacle course with running, climbing and a lot of mud involved — was love at first obstacle for Nicholas. It inspired him to mold the program at Epic, to include more high-intensity interval and circuit-based training, "ideal for these Spartan races."

"You've really gotta be an all-around good athlete and pay attention to all parts of your physical fitness to do well," he says.

And if you think you can do an endurance race because you've run a marathon, think again: "This is a whole new adventure. Marathoners, they already have the mindset — but a lot of runners don't do any types of weights at all," he says. "We don't go crazy heavy in weights, but we do use a lot of kettlebells, which take agility, stability and coordination."

The workout itself, which consists of seven entirely different classes that rotate every four weeks, isn't just for the would-be warriors.

"About 30 percent [of members] do the races," Nicholas says. "A lot of people are just happy to get a workout in, excited to be part of a different style of workout. We don't put pressure on people to do the races."

EVA KIS
@thisiskis
eva.kis@metro.us

The class

SGX Spartan Inspired

Alex Nicholas / RSHAUNMADER

Walking into Epic should be intimidating — there is nothing but a long expanse of mats and neat rows of equipment along the walls just promising to make you grunt and sweat. The class consists of 45-second circuits of obstacle stations around the gym, from tossing and catching a 20-pound leather ball (combined with squats) to jumping from the floor onto a chest-high stack of mats, uneven monkey bars (harder than you think) and various other ways to leverage your own body weight against you so that you'll reconsider second helpings forever. If an obstacle proves too difficult, burpees pass the time.

There's no part of you that gets a break, but the camaraderie between you and your partner (classes are capped at 16 and you're usually paired up) isn't like sweating side-by-side elsewhere — it's knowing they've seen your best and worst, and were showing you the same. **Bottom line:** It might be the hardest workout in the city — and even if you didn't start out wanting to race, by the end you may reconsider.

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Horoscope

♒ Aquarius | Jan. 21-Feb. 18
Travel and romance will go hand-in-hand. Your warm heart will attract many new acquaintances. Get involved in competitive sports.

♓ Pisces | Feb. 19-March 20
Don't take chances while operating machinery or equipment. You will be misunderstood if you aren't precise.

♈ Aries | March 21-April 20
Love can be hot, as long as you avoid getting trapped in a one-sided relationship. You will be lazy and will lack discipline when it comes to your fitness program.

♉ Taurus | April 21-May 21
Concentrate on your domestic chores before your family complains about your lack of helpfulness. You may feel a little under the weather.

♊ Gemini | May 22-June 20
You can meet people with influence if you attend intellectual events. Don't exaggerate your talents. You may find yourself embarrassed.

♋ Cancer | June 21-July 22
Erratic behavior by you or your partner will lead to sudden changes in your living arrangements. Consider going for professional help.

♌ Leo | July 23-Aug. 22
Opportunities for financial gains are prominent. Lady Luck is with you, and your insight into making choices will be advantageous.

♍ Virgo | Aug. 23-Sept. 22
Don't put off a doctor's appointment just because you are feeling a little better. Stress is probably at the root of your problem. Rest will be necessary.

♎ Libra | Sept. 23-Oct. 22
A romantic encounter will be stressful. Mixing business with pleasure could be fun, but highly dangerous as well.

♏ Scorpio | Oct. 23-Nov. 21 Your hard work will pay off. You should feel satisfied and confident about your professional direction.

♐ Sagittarius | Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Start those hobbies you've been thinking about. One of them may turn into a lucrative pastime. You can make changes that will enhance your appearance.

♑ Capricorn | Dec. 22-Jan. 20 Deception is apparent when dealing with family or children. You may want to put some energy into beautifying your living quarters.

EUGENIA LAST

Sudoku: Easy and hard

		8			2	3		
6	7				5		8	2
		9	4				1	6
			6			7		1
9		1			4			
1	3				7	4		
4	8		2				7	3
		7	3			6		

			7					
9	7			6	5			2
				9	8		3	
		4	6		7		9	5
	1						7	
7	2		5		4	6		
	8		3	7				
1			2	5			8	3
					6			

How to play
Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

Letters to the editor

Get tested for prostate cancer every year

I would like to express my views on prostrate cancer, a most common disease in men. This can be a most dangerous disease when undiscovered, not properly diagnosed and left untreated. About 30,000 men will die nationwide this year of prostrate cancer, and one out of seven will develop this disease, as reported by North Shore/ LIJ information division.

The answer is early detection and treatment. I understand that only too well. I have just been diagnosed last week with an aggressive prostrate cancer and my doctor recommends that the prostrate be removed and I will undergo the procedure next month. I have been tested for the disease over the last 10 years and had a low PSA rating, but failed to get the test in 2013 and that could have made the difference.

Now I have to undergo a more aggressive procedure. I guess I thought I was too busy for a physical check-up. I therefore urge all men to get tested over the age of 55 to get tested. Prostrate cancer is the most curable cancer when treated.

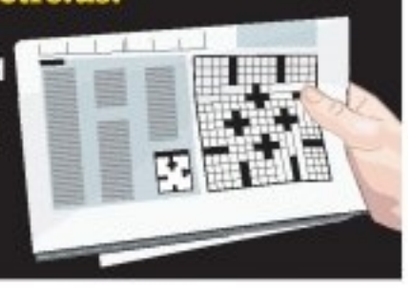
FREDERICK R. BEDELL JR., VIA EMAIL

letters@metro.us

Keep them as brief as possible, preferably under 100 words. Metro reserves the right to edit all letters. Please include your name and contact info.

Visit us online at **Metro.us.**

Use your smartphone to find today's crossword answers! Download and open the Blippar app on your smartphone and hold the screen over the puzzle.

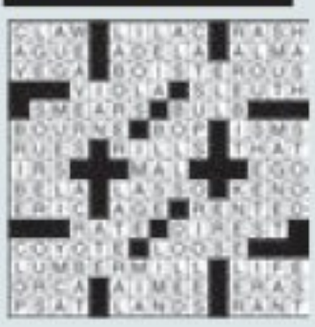


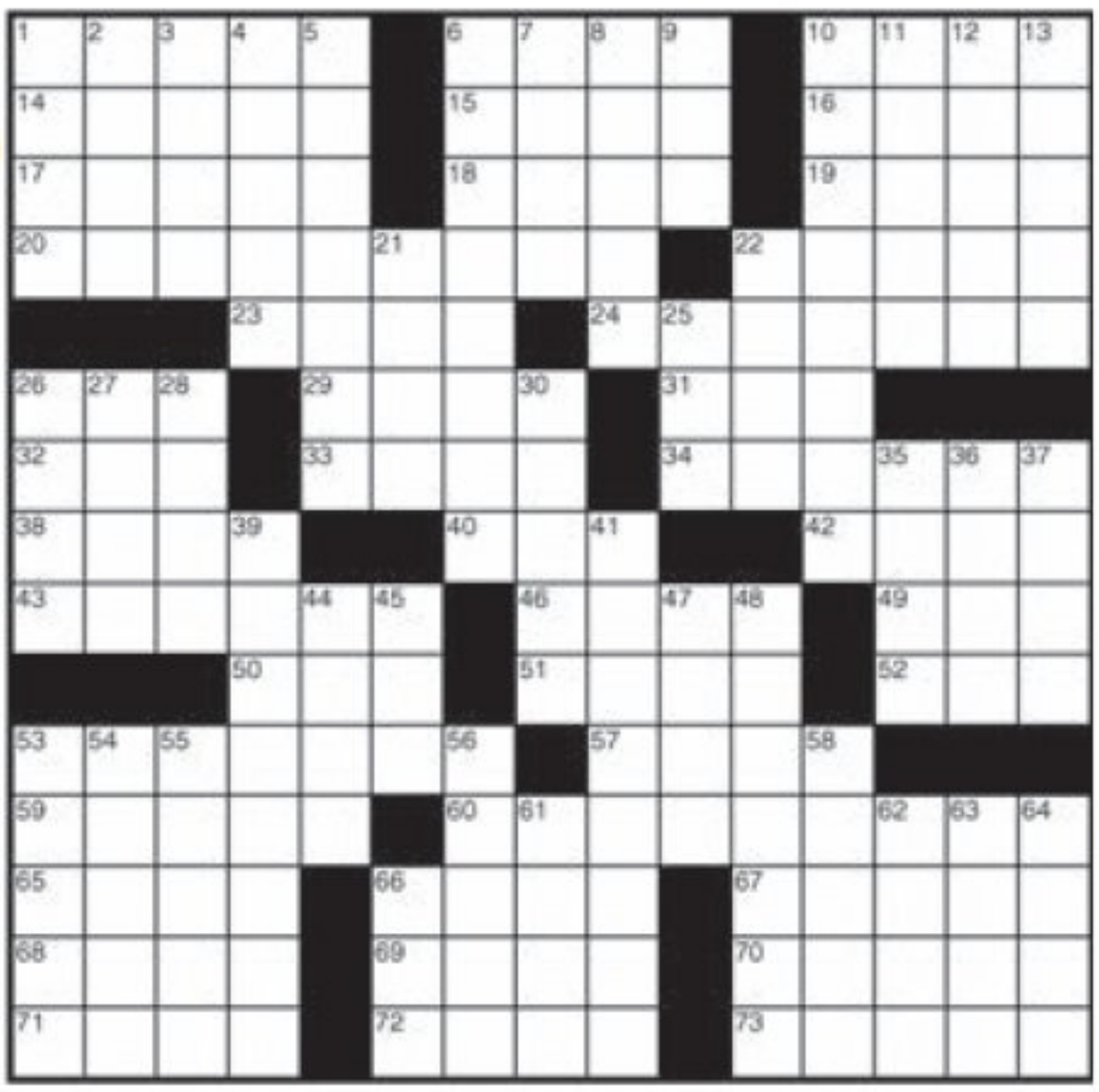
Crossword

Across
1 Narrows the gap
6 Mince
10 Stick
14 Michael Caine role
15 Curved molding
16 Take cover
17 Plaid wearers
18 Glowing ember
19 Clay pot
20 July's flowers
22 Less courteous
23 Thailand, once
24 Pencil ends
26 Goose egg
29 Bullfight bravos
31 Double helix
32 Turkish official
33 Historic ship
34 Mythical sailor
38 Futons and pallets
40 Young Cratchit
42 Cartoon chipmunk
43 Dependable
46 Lunch hour, often
49 Part of UCLA
50 London lav
51 Inner —
52 Mouse alert
53 Skies above
57 Costa –
59 Radius neighbors
60 Sink in
65 A step up, maybe?
66 "La Vie en Rose" chanteuse
67 Lattice
68 Comics pooch
69 Neutral color
70 Batman's sidekick
71 Not e'en once
72 Pass the word
73 Marshy hollow

Down
1 Chemist's condiment
2 La senorita
3 Way, way off
4 Hockey arenas
5 Formal meeting
6 Passport or visa
7 Inventor — Sikorsky
8 Desist
9 Moray
10 Grand, slangily
11 Playwright Oscar —
12 Goof-off
13 Forward and reverse
21 Sanskrit dialect
22 Hindu royalty
25 Rural rtes.
26 Seizes suddenly
27 Is this the thanks — —?
28 Put cargo aboard
30 New Orleans gridder
35 Hay unit
36 Shampoo additive
37 Cubicle filler
39 Flotsam retriever
41 Plaintive
44 Forest grazers
45 Hither and —
47 Emmy relative
48 Honey sources
53 A Great Lake
54 Dodge
55 Singer — Lennox
56 Cloves or nutmeg
58 Quiver filler
61 British peer
62 "Waterloo" group
63 Elbow grease
64 Ocean flier
66 Boxer, maybe

Yesterday's answer





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3 SPORTS

Trade rumors

Foles draws interest

According to several sources, as many as three teams have shown interest in trading for Eagles quarterback Nick Foles. Among those rumored to want the oft-injured signal-caller is the Rams, who hold the No. 10 overall draft pick.

Pats may opt to ground and pound vs. 'Hawks

Super Bowl XLIX. Seattle has shown signs that it can be run on.

Few would argue with the statement that Seattle has the best defense in the NFL. In the regular season, the Seahawks gave up the fewest yards, had the No. 1 passing defense and No. 3 rush defense. As such, the defending Super Bowl champions really don't have a weakness on that side of the ball. But if you had to choose a way to attack it, New England appears — on paper at least — to be better suited to try and run on them rather than force Tom Brady to throw 40-plus passes against their superb secondary.

This is assuming that All-Pro safety Earl Thomas (shoulder) and All-Pro cornerback Richard Sherman (elbow) both play and are relatively effective. The health of Thomas and Sherman is very important to the Patriots in terms of game-planning, then again it's hard to predict what Pats offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels will cook up for Super Bowl XLIX on Sunday (6:30, NBC) in Glendale, Arizona.

New England's previous two games this postseason couldn't be more different. Against Baltimore, the Patriots fell behind early and had to abandon the run pretty quickly as it proved completely ineffective (14 total rushing yards) against the Ravens' top-notch run defense. Indianapolis, on the other hand, was simply overmatched. LeGarrette Blount dominated the Colts last year in the playoffs and he did the same thing in the AFC title game with 148 rushing yards and three touchdowns.

RICH SLATE
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Mild success

A look at what Seattle has allowed on the ground in the postseason:

- Packers RB **Eddie Lacy** had 73 yards rushing in the NFC title game. Green Bay ran for 135 yards as a team.
- Carolina's **Jonathan Stewart** had 70 yards rushing in the divisional round. The Panthers ran for 132 yards.

LeGarrette Blount was released by the Steelers in November but was quickly scooped up by the Patriots. / GETTY IMAGES

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NBA power rankings | by Jeff McMenamin

No. 1

Hawks (27-8)

The Hawks simply cannot be stopped. They've pushed their winning streak to 16 games and their defense is stifling opponents to a league-best 96.2 points per game.

No. 2

Warriors (36-6)

The Warriors are outscoring their opponents this season by 11.9 points per game — tops in the NBA. They're easily the top team in the West right now.

No. 3

Grizzlies (32-12)

The Grizzlies have gone 7-1 in their last eight games with impressive wins over the Blazers and Raptors recently.

No. 4

Clippers (31-14)

The Clippers went a perfect 4-0 last week and outscored their opponents by a dominating 18 points per game.

No. 5

Blazers (21-11)

LaMarcus Aldridge's injured thumb couldn't have come at a worse time, as Portland faced some very tough Clippers, Spurs, Grizzlies and Suns teams.

No. 6

Rockets (31-14)

Houston couldn't shake the Warriors this season. They suffered a season sweep (0-4) for the first time since the 1973-74 season.

No. 7

Bulls (29-17)

With Joakim Noah now back in the lineup after missing four games to injury, wins should start to trend upward in Chicago.

No. 8

Mavericks (30-15)

The Mavs survived a scare Sunday when Tyson Chandler walked away from a right-knee collision with Anthony Davis with just soreness.

No. 9

Spurs (29-17)

San Antonio has used 23 different starting lineups this season. But with Kawhi Leonard back, the Spurs are looking strong.

No. 10

Wizards (29-13)

The Wizards narrowly fell in close losses to the Thunder and Blazers this week. The road won't get easier for John Wall and Co.

Deflate-gate

Patriots saga continues with 'Urine-gate'

#Urinate-gate was trending on Twitter Monday night and Tuesday morning as it was learned that the NFL's prime suspect in Deflate-gate — a locker-room attendant — took footballs into a bathroom at Gillette Stadium for 90 seconds prior to the AFC title game.

Pro Football Talk reported that the bathroom "on the way to the field" at Gillette Stadium consists of one toilet, one sink and a door that locks from inside.

Kraft and Belichick insist that there was no wrong-doing. / GETTY IMAGES

The question now, of course, is could the attendant have had enough time to deflate 11 balls in 90 seconds? According to the PFT report, the attendant brought two bags of balls into the bathroom with him — the 12 balls to be used by the Patriots and the 12 balls to be used by the Colts. Pats head coach Bill Belichick and owner Robert Kraft, have appeared angry at press conferences in recent days as they claim innocence.

"I am disappointed in the way this entire matter has been handled and reported upon," Kraft said. "I want to make it clear that I believe unconditionally that the [Patriots] have done nothing inappropriate in this process or in violation of NFL rules." MATT BURKE

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Position battles starting to take shape for Philly Union

NHL. New Union faces will create new competition at the 2015 training camp.

Historically, the Union have relied on at least one consistent striker up top and solid goaltending between the pipes from Zac MacMath to propel the team to victory.

With training camp now underway for the 2015 Union squad, there's a whole different identity which should present itself when preseason begins in late February.

MacMath was loaned to the Colorado Rapids earlier this month and the team added two talented strikers to an already proven group, which is expected to boost the Union's offensive attack.

Suddenly the Union find themselves in relatively unfamiliar territory, with position battles throughout the roster. Here's a look at three positions that will be very competitive heading into the preseason.

JEFF MCMENAMIN
@Jeff_McMenamin
sports@metro.us

Sebastien Le Toux returns as one of Philly's top scorers heading into 2015. / ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Forwards

Union forwards Sebastien Le Toux and Conor Casey have combined for 32 goals for the team in the past two seasons. Add in Andrew Wenger, who notched six last season, plus newcomers C.J. Sapong and rookie Dzenan Catic (39 last season in college) and Union manager Jim Curtin suddenly has some tough decisions to make in terms of minutes this season.

Similar to last season, Wenger is expected to start at left wing with Le Toux on the right, but Sapong will likely overtake Casey in the middle. Having a potent goal scorer like Casey as the first man off the bench is a huge upgrade over Danny Cruz last season. Catic will need to prove himself to the coaching staff before given the chance at meaningful minutes. Regardless of how the minute allotment shakes out, the Union should be much more potent offensively.

Back line issues

Since the Union traded defender Amobi Okugo in the offseason to Orlando City SC, the coaches have had some difficult decisions to make about the back line for their remaining squad. After Monday's training session at YSC Sports, Union technical director Chris Albright hinted about another possible blow to the back line.

"All I can say regarding Carlos [Valdes] is there's a negotiation ongoing," Albright said. "Nothing is finalized as of yet."

THE UNION COULD PUT MAURICE EDU ON THE BACK LINE IN 2015.

Valdes, who didn't practice Monday, started in eight games for the Union at center back after playing for Colombia in the 2014 World Cup. If traded, the team will likely need to add another veteran to the back line in his place.

Goaltenders

Rais M'Bolhi is unquestionably the starter this season for the Union, but getting to start in net is based on performance. If he slips up, the Union fanbase is well aware of the team's No. 1 selection in the 2014 MLS SuperDraft, Andre Blake, who sits right behind him in the depth chart.

By no means did M'Bolhi blow anybody away last season with the Union. He went just 1-2-1 in his four starts. He had seven saves on 13 shots in that span. In his one draw, he let up a late equalizer in stoppage time against the Chicago Fire which severely dashed the team's playoff hopes. Had they won in the late season matchup, they would've been tied for fifth in the Eastern Conference with three matches remaining. Instead, they dropped to seventh and never recovered.

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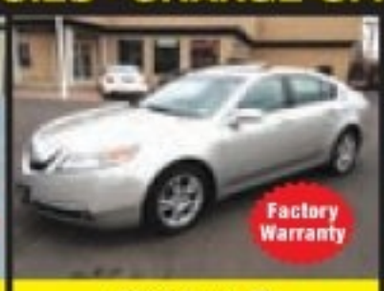

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